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ABSTRACT

Past research has assumed that differences between parents and school officials on the topic of discipline are to be expected. Previous student rights research has also tended to focus on student reactions. To explore differences among students', teachers' and parents' perceptions of student rights, three studies were conducted. The first included elementary and high school teachers, junior and senior high school students, and parents. The second included parents and tenth grade students. The third included Indian and non-Indian parents and reservation and off-reservation teachers. Studies I and II supported the differences in parents' and students' perceptions. Studies I and III produced no parent-teacher differences. Study III produced no differences between Cheyenne (reservation) and non-Cheyenne parents. The age-related progression of attitudes found in Study I tended to agree with previous research. (JAC)

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RESERVATION AND OFF-RESERVATION PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT RIGHTS

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Reservation and Off-reservation Parent,
Teacher and Student Perceptions of Student Rights

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While students and their overseers may differ in their perceptions of student rights, given a natural school related social interaction, parents and school officials are likely to view the educational point in question more as one of control, power or discipline (Martin, Baksh & Singh, 1980; Smith & LaPlante, 1980) than as one of student rights. Past research has proceeded from the perspective that differences among parents and school officials concerning discipline are to be expected, and student rights research has tended to focus on describing student reactions.

The objective of the studies reported in this paper is to explore differences among parents', teachers', and students' perceptions of student rights. Attitudes, defined as expressed preferences forming theoretically and practically useful reference points in social behavior patterns, are significant in school related interpersonal interactions. Theoretically, attitudes concerning rights are a function of age (Bryant, 1979; Chamberlin, 1979). The perspective taken by this paper is that parents and teachers may "share meanings" or agree concerning interactions between students and public school officials (Blau, 1964), that students' perceptions differ from those of their overseers and that a student rights perspective is a potentially heuristic approach to the study of social interaction in the schools.

An inclusive literature review would be prohibitive because the perspective advocated by this paper implicates the research literature of discipline and student rights, and legal precedents concerning both discipline and student rights. Practical pleas for parent-teacher cooperation concerning discipline parallel the perspective taken here that undifferentiated parent-teacher attitudes toward rights prevail. That is, recent literature (Miller, 1981; Hymes, 1980; Etheridge, Collins & Coats, 1979) advocates cooperation between parents and teachers in implementing disciplinary measures and programs. Such advocacy is to be expected especially in light of recent data implying that school officials (superintendents) and parents disagree on the importance of discipline among the problems faced by schools (Duea & Bishop, 1980). Research concerning discipline has both equivocated on whether student and teacher perceptions differ (Martin, et al., 1980) and has indicated agreement (Smith & LaPlante, 1980). According to Bryant (1970) research on student rights has focused on court cases and involved descriptive studies of students as subjects. Two recent studies have involved only students who were predominantly black; one study involved rural students (Chamberlin, 1979) the other employed inner-city students (Bryant, 1979). In the Chamberlin (1979) study, age was related to student perceptions of rights, and grade level was related to differences among students across specific rights in the Bryant (1979) study. Both of these studies focused on constitutional or other legal rights and litigation, and stimulus materials at times confused measurement of knowledge of and attitudes toward rights.

Though there is latitude to read the literature and psychology of student rights constructively, hypotheses echo the perspective and theoretical framework discussed above. Therefore, while no differences were predicted between parents and teachers or between ethnic groups, it was hypothesized that students would express more positive or liberal attitudes toward exercise of student rights than parents.

METHOD

Data were collected with three different instruments each administered to a unique sample. Consequently, associated subjects, materials, procedures and results are described for each of these studies separately.

Study I

Subjects A total of 90 people including 16 elementary teachers, 11 high school teachers, 17 junior high students, 16 senior high students, and 30 parents attending a parent-teacher organization meeting responded to a 50 item questionnaire. The teachers and students were from an elementary school and a junior-senior high school located next to each other in a small rural community in a Western state. All subjects were volunteers.

Materials Three teachers devised a 50 item, 5 point Likert scaled questionnaire. They were given sample items keyed for positive responses with respect to student rights and developed items based on their student handbook and their own notions of law and the school environment. (See Appendix A for sample items).

Procedures Ninth and twelfth grade classes responded to the questionnaire in class on the same day. Elementary and junior - senior high school teachers completed and returned the questionnaire over a several day period and parents were surveyed during the same week in the Spring at a parent-teacher organization meeting. This school was selected because teachers and staff indicated interest in participating in this pilot study.

Results After poorly worded items, those requiring "knowledge" and items which could not be keyed were removed by the author, 31 items remained for which the coefficient alpha estimate of reliability was .72. Data were analyzed by the author employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner & Bent, 1975), as with the other two studies.

Mean scores and standard deivations were respectively, for elementary teachers 86.56, 8.46; for parents 91.50, 9.15; for high school teachers 92.91, 8.93; for junior high students 99.82, 10.81; and for senior high students 104.82, 11.96. A one-way analysis of variance resulted in significant differences among groups ($F = 8.91$, $df = 4, 85$, $p < .001$). Least Significant Difference comparisons indicated that both student group responses were higher than elementary teacher and parent groups, and that high school student responses were higher than high school teacher responses. Parent and teacher mean scores were not significantly different nor were junior and senior high school student mean scores.

Given that parents deal with both junior - and senior high students, that elementary teachers instruct younger pupils than high school teachers and that junior high students are younger than senior high students, the absolute values of the groups' mean scores can be seen as increasing in an "age related" progression.

Study II

Subjects A total of 53 people including 8 male and 19 female parents and 8 female and 18 male 10th grade volunteers responded to a 27 item questionnaire. The tenth graders were one class from a high school in a city of 100,000 in a Western state. Parents were volunteers from among those in attendance at a parent-teacher organization meeting.

Materials One teacher from the school in which data were collected devised a 27 item, 5 point Likert scaled questionnaire with the questionnaire from Study I as a model. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were male or female, parent or student and their grade, also.

Procedures Tenth graders and parents were surveyed during the same week. This school was selected because the questionnaire constructor, a teacher in the school, agreed to participate by collecting data

Results After inappropriate items were removed by the author, 14 items remained for which a coefficient alpha estimate of reliability was calculated to be .52. A 2 x 2 analysis of variance (Sex by Respondent) resulted in a significant main effect for Respondent ($F = 9.33$, $df = 1, 49$, $p < .01$), but not for Sex ($F = 1.82$, $df = 1, 49$, $p > .18$) or the interaction of these two factors ($F = .4$, of $1, 49$, $p > .5$). Means, standard deviations and sample sizes are reported in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Means, standard deviations and sample sizes for Study II

		RESPONDENTS	
		Student	Parent
SEX	Male	$\bar{X} = 46.89$ $SD = 6.55$ $N = 18$	$\bar{X} = 41.13$ $SD = 3.72$ $N = 8$
	Female	$\bar{X} = 48.00$ $SD = 4.75$ $N = 8$	$\bar{X} = 44.21$ $SD = 4.40$ $N = 19$

Study III

Subjects A total of 65 people including 19 Northern Cheyenne parents and 6 white teachers from the reservation school, 10 non- Indian parents and 30 off-reservation teachers from another high school in the same city of 100,000 mentioned in Study II participated. Parents surveyed were volunteers from among those in attendance at parent-organization meetings at the schools.

Materials The author constructed a 30 item, 5 point Likert scaled questionnaire based on the questionnaires used in Studies I and II. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were teachers or parents although this and their ethnic identities were independently verified by the teacher (off-reservation) and college student (on-reservation) who collected the data.

Procedures Data were collected from parents and teachers in the same week at each school during the Spring. The off-reservation school was selected because the teachers who collected data had agreed to cooperate. They verified that none of the teachers or parents was Indian. The reservation school was selected because the college student who agreed to collect data was a tribal member. She verified all parents as Northern Cheyenne tribal members.

Results The coefficient alpha estimate of reliability for the 30 item questionnaire was calculated to be .79. Mean scores and standard deviations were, respectively, for off-reservation teachers 93.73, 12.85; for non-Indian parents 90.10, 12.30; for white reservation teachers 84.83, 10.74; and for Northern Cheyenne parents 92.42, 13.06. A one way analysis of variance resulted in no significant differences among groups ($F = .72$, $df = 3, 61$, $p > .5$).

DISCUSSION

Clearly, only a neophyte would discuss the data from one of the three studies in isolation and collectively they must be discussed with caution due to their pilot nature. While recognizing methodological difficulties, it should be noted that the data especially of Study III are a very difficult variety to collect.

Studies I and II support the contention that parents and students differ in their perceptions of student rights, while Study I implies that teachers also differ from students. Studies I and III produced no parent-teacher differences and Study III produced no difference between Cheyenne and non-Cheyenne parents; none of the differences and "non-differences" was contradictory. Future research needed to illuminate seeming "non-differences" is in progress. The absence of attitudinal differences between Cheyenne and other parents is understandable from the perspective of cultural materialism (Harris, 1968), in absence of economic domination.

The age related progression of attitudes found in Study I agrees with previous research (Bryant, 1979; Chamberlin, 1979) as well as the philosophical notion of "natural sovereignty" (Miller, 1981). Should the relative parent, teacher and student perceptions found in these studies apply, the cooperation advocated by other authors (Miller, 1981; Hymes, 1980; Etheridge, et al., 1979) seems more likely to occur from the student rights approach to student relations and interpersonal interaction than from the discipline direction.

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APPENDIX A

Sample items from Study I

1. Student publications should be censored.
2. Students should be allowed on governing bodies (school boards).
3. Students should participate in their own academic evaluation.
4. Students understand their educational needs.

Sample items from Study II

1. Students should be able to marry and attend school.
2. Students should have a right to have access to the gym during evening hours under supervision.
3. Students should be allowed to eat, smoke, or drink in class.
4. Students should have to attend graduation ceremonies.

Sample items from Study III

1. I believe that students should be allowed to have candy & pop machines in the hall.
2. I believe that students should have the right to choose subjects they want to learn.
3. I believe that students should have the right to wear any length of hair in school.
4. I believe that students should not have to attend graduation ceremonies to graduate.